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St. Helena

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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I. General

1. St. Helena,[1] which is a Non-Self-Governing Territory administered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, consists of the island of St. Helena and two dependencies: the island of Ascension and a group of small islands forming the dependency of Tristan da Cunha.

2. Situated in the South Atlantic Ocean, approximately 1,900 kilometres from Angola and 2,900 kilometres from Brazil, St. Helena is a small island of volcanic origin. The Territory comprises a total land area of 412 square kilometres: Ascension lies 1,200 kilometres to the north-west of St. Helena, and Tristan da Cunha and the other small islands are approximately 2,400 kilometres to the south. The island of St. Helena, where Jamestown, the capital of the Territory, is located, is the largest island, with an area of 122 square kilometres. The islands enjoy a tropical climate tempered by trade winds that blow throughout the year. They have distinctive flora and fauna, with many rare or endangered species.

3. The inhabitants of St. Helena are known as "Saints" or St. Helenians and are of mixed origin (see para. 5 below). According to the 1998 census, 5,010 people lived on St. Helena. However, at July 2003, the St. Helena Statistics Office estimated that there were between 3,750 and 3,800 inhabitants on the island, meaning that a quarter of the population had left in just over five years. The Office noted that, following the reintroduction of granting British citizenship for Saints in 2002, the island had experienced an exodus. In 2006, the population was 4,157 inhabitants.[2] While it is difficult to provide an exact forecast of the future population, it is likely that the high emigration numbers will be reduced, since most people with a desire to leave the island have already done so and the population in the age groups most likely to leave has been depleted. Approximately one third of the population resides in Jamestown. English is the official language of St. Helena. Access to St. Helena is provided by the RMS *St. Helena*, which serves St. Helena, Ascension, Walvis Bay, Namibia and Cape Town, South Africa. The nearest airstrip is located on Ascension.

4. Following extended consultation between the Government of St. Helena and the Department for International Development of the Government of the United Kingdom, it was announced in March 2005 that the Department would provide funding for the construction of an international airport on St. Helena. With recent announced delays, the airport is now expected to become operational by 2011-2012, when the RMS *St. Helena* will be retired from service.

5. St. Helena was discovered in 1502 by the Portuguese navigator Juan da Nova on St. Helena Day, 21 May. It was an uninhabited island. Its existence was kept secret until the English seafarer Thomas Cavendish came upon it in 1588. In 1633 the Netherlands claimed the island but did not occupy it. In 1658 a charter from the Lord Protector of Britain authorized the British East India Company to colonize and fortify the island, which was subsequently settled by the English. Slaves were brought from Africa, Madagascar and the Far East. Chinese and some Indian indentured labourers were brought to work on the island. King George II issued a charter to the East India Company setting out how the island should be fortified and

[1] The information contained in the present paper has been derived from published sources, including those of the territorial Government, and from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the administering Power under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations.

[2] Information provided by the administering Power, January 2007.

governed. In the charter, the King also gave the inhabitants full English citizenship in perpetuity. Napoleon Bonaparte was exiled to St. Helena from 1815 until his death in 1821. St. Helena became a Crown Colony in 1834. In May 2002, St. Helena celebrated the five hundredth anniversary of its discovery.

II. Constitutional, legal and political developments

6. The St. Helena Constitution Order of 1988, which entered into force on 1 January 1989, replaced the Constitution of St. Helena and dependencies introduced on 1 January 1967. Under the 1988 Constitution, the Governor and Commander-in-Chief, who is appointed by the United Kingdom Government, administers the Territory. He is assisted by an Executive Council and a Legislative Council.

7. The Legislative Council comprises the Speaker, three ex officio members (the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney General) and 12 elected members. The Executive Council, which is presided over by the Governor, consists of the ex officio members and five of the elected members of the Legislative Council. Although a member of the Legislative Council and the Executive Council, the Attorney General has no vote in either body.

8. Elections are held by secret ballot, at intervals of not more than four years, by universal suffrage for those aged 18 years and over. While two political parties exist, they have been inactive since 1976 and elections have been held on a non-partisan basis. The most recent general elections were held on 31 August 2005, when 12 candidates representing two constituencies were elected to the Legislative Council. The elections marked a change in the number of electoral districts. Two districts (East and West) replaced the former eight constituencies. Michael Clancy, appointed in October 2004, continues his tenure as Governor of St. Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha.

9. In June 2006, a draft bill to make provision for the representation of the British overseas territories in the European Union and in Parliament was presented by a Member of Parliament, Daniel Kawczynski. The bill proposed that the British overseas territories be represented in the House of Lords through the appointment of "two, three extra peers", who would represent all 14 British overseas territories; it also called for the provision of specific assistance through the United Kingdom Representative Office in Brussels to overcome bureaucratic hurdles when applying for funding from the European Union. According to Mr. Kawczynski, the bill would give the British overseas territories the ability to have representation where needed, which he hoped would "reverse the dissatisfaction" that some British overseas territories felt towards the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and "how it ignored them and their concerns". He also pointed out the "tremendous military benefits" that these territories and their surrounding waters added to the military outreach of the United Kingdom, while stating that the United Kingdom Government had "a duty and responsibility" to look after the territories both at home and in the European Union. Following parliamentary procedure, the bill will receive a second reading in the House on 12 May 2007 and be printed as Bill 168.[3]

[3] *St. Helena Herald*, 16 June 2006.

10. The Constitution of St. Helena provides for the separation of the judiciary from the Government. The legal system comprises a Court of Appeal, a Supreme Court and a Magistrate's Court, with a final appeal procedure lying open to the Privy Council of the United Kingdom. Local legislation is generally applied. However, where no local legislation has been enacted, the laws of the United Kingdom are applied to the extent applicable to local circumstances.

11. In January 1983, when the British Nationality Act came into force, St. Helenians had their citizenship rights taken away. From that time until 2002, the islanders worked through the Legislative Council and the Citizenship Commission for the restoration of their rights. Following the entry into force of the British Overseas Territories Act of May 2002, which provides British citizenship to the people of the United Kingdom's territories, St. Helenians regained their right to British citizenship. Under the Act, St. Helenians may hold British passports and may also work anywhere within the European Union.

12. Extensive negotiations and public consultations in relation to constitutional reform and modernization have been carried out in St. Helena since 2001. Desiring a system of government that would give more responsibility to locally elected representatives, the Government of St. Helena entered into discussions with the United Kingdom and engaged the services of an independent constitutional adviser to assist with examining options for constitutional reform and drafting a new constitution for the Territory.

13. In October 2002, following consultations with the adviser, the Legislative Council announced its proposed constitutional changes, which included a three-tier system of ministerial government (comprising a Legislative Assembly, a Cabinet (with the Chief Minister as President) and an Executive Council (with the Governor presiding)), Legislative Assembly elections conducted partly on a multi-constituency and partly on an island-wide basis, the popular election of the Chief Minister and the inclusion of a bill of rights, to ascertain whether they were well supported by the public.[4]

14. The final draft constitution was completed following additional rounds of negotiations in 2003 and 2004. The new constitution proposed three main changes to the existing constitutional system in St. Helena:

- Government by reference to the partnership values
- New guarantees of fundamental human rights
- A two-tier ministerial form of government

Further details on the proposed constitutional changes are contained in the 2005 working paper (A/AC.109/2005/14, paras. 11-25).

15. Following extensive negotiations and public consultations, a consultative poll was held on 25 May 2005 on St. Helena to determine whether St. Helenians wanted to adopt the new constitution. The United Kingdom had stressed that it would not bring the new constitution into force until it received a clear signal from St. Helenians that they wished to adopt the draft constitution.

[4] Ibid., 11 October 2002.

16. St. Helenians who voted in the consultative poll rejected the proposal by 52.6 per cent against and 47.2 per cent in favour. The new ministerial system of government was particularly controversial, whereas the human rights chapter and the partnership values declaration received more public support.[5] Members of the Legislative Council resolved to continue constitutional reform by incorporating the popular changes into the framework of the existing Constitution and working to streamline the current Government. For the 2006-2007 financial year, the Department for International Development made £100,000 available for the restructuring and modernization of the St. Helena Government.[6]

III. Economic conditions

A. General

17. In 2006, St. Helena continued to face the economic challenges associated with a shrinking tax base, an ageing population and the exodus of skilled individuals leaving in pursuit of higher wages offshore. St. Helena's heavy dependence on aid from the United Kingdom and other external funding for capital and technical investment allows the population to enjoy a higher standard of living than local resources would otherwise be able to sustain. St. Helena's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita for 2006 was £3,100. The budgetary support from the United Kingdom is used to meet essential public services and to subsidize the Territory's dedicated shipping service.[7] In real terms, aid from the United Kingdom has declined over the past decade, and this has had an effect on the St. Helena economy, although the aid still accounts for about 35 per cent of recurrent and all public investment expenditures. As well as supporting the Government's annual budget, much of the capital investment in the Territory is funded through the Department for International Development.[8]

18. A visit to St. Helena by Department for International Development representatives to discuss the 2006-2007 aid package took place between 26 February and 6 March 2007. The aim of the visit was to start to put in place a new partnership to lay the foundations for the new era that St. Helena is entering with the introduction of air access and the prospects for transforming the economy. The St. Helena Government has been drafting a sustainable development plan, which formulates the policy approach for moving towards sustainable development in the period leading up to the opening of the airport.

19. The strategic objectives of the plan seek to establish the future path for St. Helena's economic and social development. The plan for 2007-2008 and 2009-2010 sets out a broad development strategy, which is supported by a vision and six strategic objectives, outlining the commitment of the Government of St Helena to the redevelopment process. It is the aim of the St. Helena Government, through this sustainable development plan, to charter the Territory's social and economic transformation. All departments within the St. Helena Government are expected to

[5] Ibid., 3 June 2005.

[6] Ibid., 23 June 2006.

[7] United Kingdom Overseas Territories Department, Department for International Development, press release, 14 March 2005.

[8] www.sainthelena.gov.sh.

produce business plans which are linked to the sustainable development plan, still in draft form. A target date for June 2007 has been agreed by the St. Helena Government for finalizing the plan, following wide consultations with the public, the private sector and civil society.

20. It was also agreed that the production of the sustainable development plan provided the strategic framework to move to a three-year package of support until 2010. The three-year rolling framework would be reviewed every two years. As an incentive to implement policy decisions that would enable the St. Helena Government to deliver on the sustainable development plan and maximize economic benefits flowing from airport construction and related development, all parties agreed that St. Helena will be able to retain and reallocate any budgetary savings in the recurrent budget made from efficiency measures and/or higher domestic revenues within the three-year framework. However, the recurrent budget also has a "hard budget ceiling", which means that any overspends will have to be met by in-year reprioritization or expenditure savings.[9]

21. The six strategic objectives that had been agreed to with the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and approved following consultations with the population in 2003 remain the following:

- Improved access
- Improved standard of education
- Development of a sustainable and vibrant economy
- Development of a healthy community in a safe environment
- Promotion and development of a sustainable workforce
- Continuing development and establishment of democratic rights, human rights and self-determination of the people.

22. According to information provided by the administering Power, total budgetary aid, development assistance and shipping support from the United Kingdom Government was £14.761 million for the 2006/07 fiscal year, compared to £13.126 million during the previous period — a 12 per cent increase. The United Kingdom approved the new aid package in June 2006.

23. Back in 2003, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had established an economic diversification programme budget to assist the British overseas territories to diversify and enhance their economic base and thereby lessen their dependence on one or two sectors. The programme provides a source of funding to support small enterprises and entrepreneurial talent to launch new business activities in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, in particular, but not exclusively, in non-traditional areas. Financing from the programme budget has been used to set up a small business expansion scheme in St. Helena, worth £150,000 per annum for three years.[10] The programme is managed by the St. Helena Development Agency. In April 2005, the Agency approved a new loan policy, which aims to fund projects that contribute to the growth and diversification of St. Helena's economy.[11]

[9] Information provided by the administering Power, March 2007.

[10] www.sainthelena.gov.sh/lifestyle.

[11] *St. Helena Herald*, 22 April 2005.

24. In addition, in order to facilitate private-sector development, the St. Helena Government established policies that focus on creating new enterprises, privatizing existing State-owned assets, and vocational training. According to the administering Power, the private sector is projected to grow as a proportion of the total economy from 30 per cent in 2004 to 40 per cent in 2015.[12]

B. Development projects

25. St. Helena has also received assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) since 1997, when the first country cooperation framework between UNDP and the St. Helena Government was approved. In 2002, the UNDP Executive Board, however, decided to cease assistance following a transition period. This decision was based on the fact that the aid provided by the United Kingdom had contributed to an increase in St. Helena's GDP per capita, which exceeded the established GDP threshold for UNDP assistance. Therefore, activities under the last ongoing project, concerning training and retraining for long-term unemployed, are to be completed by the end of 2007.[13]

26. St. Helena is also eligible to receive funds from the European Union. In July 2004, the European Commission announced that €8.6 million had been allocated to St. Helena from the European Development Fund for the period from 2004 to 2007 to improve access to the island, promote economic development and contribute to the reduction of aid dependency.[14]

27. In 2005, several major infrastructure projects were made possible on St. Helena thanks to funding from the Department for International Development and the European Development Fund. The projects included road rehabilitation and improvement and the installation of two new 1-megawatt diesel generators. In addition, existing generators were successfully refurbished and three wind turbines installed. Although the turbines provide significant cost savings, they are, according to information from the administering Power, unreliable. Upcoming development projects include a wharf improvement project, currently under review by the European Development Fund. The wharf project follows the 2005 cliff stabilization above the wharf and other key areas of Jamestown prone to rockfall. The Department for International Development has also approved £1.1 million to upgrade water-supply systems, which should improve security of supply and quality of water on St. Helena. The waste-disposal project is in the implementation phase, while vocational training and water-catchment hydrology have been completed. Other projects that are either awaiting approval from the Department for International Development or are currently in the planning stage include a wastewater project, the upgrading and extension of the electricity network, offshore fishing and the installation of additional wind turbines.[15] At an Executive Council meeting in December 2006, a wind-generation project was discussed, following agreement that wind turbines should be encouraged for environmental reasons.

[12] Ibid., 15 April 2005.

[13] Information provided by UNDP, February 2007.

[14] http://europa-eu-un.org/articles/lt/article_3725_lt.htm.

[15] Derived from information transmitted to the Secretary-General on 12 January 2006 by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations and from published sources.

During the 2006 development aid planning mission by the Department for International Development, amounts of £100,000 for the fiscal year 2006/07 and £350,000 for the fiscal year 2007/08 were set aside within the aid framework in order to procure additional wind turbines.[16]

C. Agriculture and fisheries

28. Fisheries are an important sector in St. Helena's economy. In 2004, two St. Helenian fishing vessels developed the capacity to fish beyond the 12-mile inshore waters of the island's 200-mile exclusive economic zone. There are 30 fishing boats with commercial licences. The local fishermen sell their catch to the St. Helena Fisheries Corporation. The volume of fish exported for the financial year 2005/06 was 376 metric tonnes.[17] A number of international companies have been granted licences to fish in the waters off St. Helena and Ascension, and these licences have at times contributed up to 20 per cent of all local revenue.

29. St. Helena has developed a reputation for the high quality of its coffee and fish. St. Helena's coffee is considered one of the finest premium coffees in the world. Its wild fish are the first to receive organic certification from the Soil Association, the United Kingdom's leading campaigning and certification organization for organic food and farming.[18]

30. With regard to farming, in August 2005, a drip irrigation project was completed, connecting 69 farmers to St. Helena's new irrigation system. In June 2006, a new agriculture subsidy programme for farmers took effect. It is hoped that, as well as assisting farmers, the subsidies will also help keep agricultural produce affordable.[19]

D. Transport, communications and utilities

31. St. Helena has approximately 120 kilometres of surfaced roads and 20 kilometres of earth roads. A public transport system was launched in November 2003 by the St. Helena Government.

32. In 2005 and 2006, a considerable amount of road work was completed. The road projects included resurfacing 90 kilometres of highway, patching 56 kilometres of road, cleaning 329 kilometres of road verge and building 300 metres of safety railing and 120 square metres of retaining walls. Two district and four community roads were also completed during this period.[20]

33. The only port, Jamestown, provides good anchorage, although the building of a breakwater would allow passengers of large cruise vessels to come ashore in all

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[16] www.sainthelena.gov.sh, 13 December 2006.

[17] Derived from information transmitted to the Secretary-General in January 2007 by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations and from published sources.

[18] www.sainthelena.gov.sh.

[19] Ibid., 12 May 2006.

[20] Derived from information transmitted to the Secretary-General on 12 January 2006 by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations and from published sources.

types of weather. As previously mentioned, since there is currently no airport or airstrip on the island, its only link with the outside world continues to be the RMS *St. Helena*, owned and chartered by the St. Helena Shipping Company, Ltd., which plies between St. Helena, Ascension, Walvis Bay, Namibia and Cape Town, South Africa.

34. The planned international airport on St. Helena will be funded by the Department for International Development subject to satisfactory bids for a contract to design, build and operate as well as a rigorous environmental impact assessment. In August 2006 three tenders for the design, build and operate contract were withdrawn because of contractors' concerns about the risks attached to the procurement process. However, all three contractors expressed continuing interest in being involved in the project. In response to the concerns raised, a team of surveyors was asked to carry out a topographic survey of the seabed near the site for the planned airport, which would help reduce risks for the contractors in the future.[21]

35. According to the *St. Helena Herald*, on 9 February 2007, four contractors had expressed a formal interest in bringing air access to St. Helena, by submitting capability statements for the airport design, build and operate contract by the deadline of 7 February 2007. Consultants will carry out an evaluation of these statements on behalf of the Department for International Development and the St. Helena Government. It is anticipated that a shortlist of three consortia will be approved, which will then be invited to submit full bids against an invitation to tender, likely to be issued in the second quarter of 2007. The evaluation will consider the technical capabilities of the consortia to deliver such a complex project, involving airport construction and operation, and marine engineering. It will also examine the proposals for developing capacity and generating employment on the island, in both the construction and the operation of the airport.[22]

36. The cost of undertaking the airport project has not been disclosed, as the Department for International Development considers that disclosure of cost estimates could prejudice the competitive tender process. However, recent estimates for the airport construction are reported by the media to be around £80 million.[23] On the strength of the planned airport, the United Kingdom proposes to phase out all financial assistance to St. Helena by 2030.[24]

37. The announcement by the Department for International Development that it would fund the construction and operation of an international airport on St. Helena was, in general, welcomed in the Territory, although some Saints have expressed their concern about the environmental impact on the island. The proposed airport will be located on Prosperous Bay Plain on the eastern side of the island. The airport will have a runway 2,250 metres long, which is sufficient to support the landing of long-haul jet aircraft, including the Airbus A320 and Boeing 737-800.[25] The airport is expected to service 7,000 passengers (including 1,500 tourists) in the first year and 15,000 passengers (including 8,000 tourists) by 2015.

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[21] www.news.co.sh, 11 August 2006.

[22] Ibid., 9 February 2007.

[23] *St. Helena Independent*, 18 November 2005.

[24] *St. Helena Herald*, 15 April 2005.

[25] *St. Helena Independent*, 18 November 2005.

38. A Development Board was formed in June 2005 to oversee the air access project. The Board consists of representatives from the Government of St. Helena, the private sector and civil society. The Board's main role is to advise the Executive Council on development policies and strategies to ensure successful completion of the airport. The main areas of interest identified by the Board are policies concerning immigration, landholding, tax, development and employment.[26] Also assisting in the airport project is the Air Access Project Team. The role of the Team has changed over time, from policymaking to facilitating the timely and cost-effective implementation of the project. Activities include liaising with other project teams (e.g. the Department for International Development Access Project Team), the St. Helena Development Board, the Government of St. Helena and other key stakeholders.[27]

E. Banking and credit

39. There have been no further developments reported in this sector since the 2005 working paper (A/AC.109/2005/14).

F. Tourism

40. The St. Helena Tourist Office has been boosting its efforts to market St. Helena as a tourist destination. Its 10-year tourism strategy focuses on four essential elements: planning, investment, delivering quality tourist services and promotion. Leading international tourism consultants have been working with St. Helena representatives to develop a strategy that encompasses all four elements.[28] In January 2007, a new tourism and investment policy became effective.[29]

41. In 2005, St. Helena experienced an increase in so-called environmental tourism, thanks to the Territory's unique attractions.[30] According to the administering Power, an estimated 1,500 passengers on cruise ships visited St. Helena in 2005 for these and other reasons. St. Helena will encourage more visits from cruise ships by emphasizing that the airport will facilitate passengers leaving or joining a cruise at the island.[31]

42. In July 2005, the St. Helena Leisure Company (Shelco), announced that it planned to invest £40 million in the Territory. One of Shelco's main projects on St. Helena is a resort with a golf course. Shelco projected that the construction and maintenance of the resort would generate 200 construction jobs for four years and 325 long-term jobs thereafter.[32] However, local hotel proprietors have expressed fears that their livelihood would be threatened by the planned development.[33] In January 2006, Shelco's application to purchase land for the resort development was

[26] *St. Helena Herald*, 10 June 2005.
[27] Ibid., 24 June 2005.
[28] Ibid., 7 October 2005.
[29] Information provided by the administering Power, January 2007.
[30] *St. Helena Herald*, 27 January 2006.
[31] St. Helena Investment and Tourism Policies, Government of St. Helena, November 2006.
[32] *St. Helena Herald*, 8 July 2005.
[33] Ibid., 15 July 2005.

deferred pending the adoption of new tourism and investment policies.[34] The policies were adopted in January 2007. The matter is now under active consideration in the form of an application under the Immigrants' Landholding (Restriction) Ordinance.[35]

43. In September 2005, a Harvard University team carried out a study that analysed the numerous tourism development proposals submitted to the Government of St. Helena. The main component of the study was a resource analysis based on the geographical mapping of St. Helena and other features related to potential tourism and other economic development.[36] One aspect of the Harvard study focused on the amount of potential building land on St. Helena. The study concluded that, as long as building density was fairly high, there would be plenty of land to go around. This conclusion allayed St. Helenians' fears that there might not be enough land once the tourism industry developed. The study also recommended encouraging private-sector investment and changing the current immigrant landholding laws to maximize the benefits anticipated by the development of the tourism industry.[37]

44. The ongoing discussion about the anticipated growth of the tourism industry on St. Helena highlighted two potential challenges which St. Helenians might face in the future: reconciling the economic benefits with sustainable development, and the life cycle of tourism destinations and the impact on the local population and its economy. The issue of sustainable development has been championed by a new non-governmental organization known as The Voice. Formed in response to the March 2005 announcement of the airport construction, the organization highlighted the availability of drinking water, fishing in the waters around the island and a potentially growing gap between the rich and the poor as some issues for the St. Helena Government to consider when setting the development agenda.

45. Most of the concerns appear to have been taken into account with the formulation of the new investment and tourism policy. With regard to investments, the policy applies to all approved investors. It provides a clear framework and underlines the intent of the Government to encourage private-sector investment to maximize the opportunities arising from the planned airport.[38]

IV. Social conditions

A. General

46. The team of representatives from the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who negotiated the country policy plan for 2001 to 2003 stated that, measured by international norms, St. Helena is a middle-income country with few signs of real material poverty. The team added that this situation is largely the result of the all-encompassing Government safety net, which guarantees everyone a minimum standard of living,

[34] Ibid., 27 January 2006.

[35] St. Helena Investment and Tourism Policies, Government of St. Helena, November 2006.

[36] *St. Helena Herald*, 2 September 2005.

[37] Ibid., 25 November 2005.

[38] St. Helena Investment and Tourism Policies, Government of St. Helena, November 2006.

and to social networks, which encourage the distribution of income among kin, most notably in the form of remittances. The country policy plan identified two particularly vulnerable sectors, namely, the increasing number of elderly people (23 per cent of the population is over the age of 65), who live on social benefits, and the disabled, who have special, unmet needs. It also points to a "culture of dependency" on the island, partly as a consequence of the Government's role as the main employer and almost the only provider of services.

47. The ageing population has created an increasing need for substantial investment in a new elderly care programme that includes sheltered housing and an elderly community care complex. There is currently one residential home called "The Haven" which provides both full-time and respite care. It is, however, housed in a converted building unsuited for elderly people. Work is in progress on a purpose-built Community Care Centre for the Elderly, which will provide both full-time resident and respite care. The project is on schedule to be completed before the end of 2007.[39]

48. There is also an increased prevalence of chronic health conditions, with diabetes and hypertension affecting about 8 per cent and 25 per cent of the population, respectively.[40] In January 2006, a visiting cardiologist noted that the high incidence of obesity on St. Helena was the main reason behind the high rate of hypertension.[41]

49. There is one general hospital in Jamestown, one psychiatric hospital and six health clinics serving people living in rural areas. In addition, two units cater to patients with behavioural problems and learning disabilities.[42]

50. In 2005, the Air Access Project sparked a debate over the potential introduction of HIV/AIDS to St. Helena from an increased number of visitors and overseas construction workers. Currently, there are no known cases of HIV/AIDS in the Territory. Proposed HIV screening was discussed at the Executive Council meeting held on 17 January 2006. After much debate and consideration, the Executive Council agreed that HIV screening should not be part of a routine examination of visitors and workers. They agreed instead to introduce other measures, such as an awareness programme and health education.[43]

B. Employment

51. The public sector remains the dominant employer in St. Helena. In 2003, the Government launched a long-term unemployment policy in which the Employment and Social Security Department has been working closely with the unemployed to identify their training needs. In 2003, when the policy was introduced, there were

[39] Information provided by the administering Power, January 2007.

[40] Derived from information transmitted to the Secretary-General on 12 January 2006 by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations and from published sources.

[41] *St. Helena Herald*, 27 January 2006.

[42] Information provided by the administering Power, January 2007.

[43] *St. Helena Herald*, 27 January 2006.

176 people on the Community Work Scheme. The policy is considered successful, as only 60 people remained on the scheme in 2006.[44]

52. In 2005, UNDP implemented a project whose overall objective was to reduce long-term unemployment on St. Helena through a joint private- and public-sector training and work experience scheme. The scheme was devised to help unemployed St. Helenians find jobs, improve their prospects of remaining employed and enhance their employment prospects.[45] As mentioned in paragraph 25 above, the UNDP project will be phased out by the end of 2007.

53. Offshore employment has steadily increased and, with it, remittances to the Territory. Approximately 1,100 St. Helenians, or close to 27 per cent of the island's workforce, are employed on Ascension, in the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) or in the United Kingdom; their remittances to St. Helena in 2005 totalled £23 million.[46] However, as virtually all contracts for offshore employment are for unaccompanied workers, there is a significant social burden because of the dislocation of families. In addition, the loss of trained staff to better-paid offshore employment makes it necessary to bring in more expatriate workers, in particular nurses and teachers. (One case mentioned by the media in October 2005 described a coffee producer who had to recruit 10 workers from Namibia and Germany to work on his coffee plantation.)[47] The St. Helena strategic review for the period from 2000 to 2010 showed that remittances from offshore workers were not sustainable and very clearly spelled out the dire consequences if people were not put at the centre of development, stating that no community could prosper if its biggest export was its people.[48]

54. The St. Helena Public Service Association came into existence in April 2005, its main goal being to aid, assist and promote the welfare and well-being of its membership. The Association is similar to a workers' union and represents the interests of St. Helena Government employees.[49]

C. Education

55. Education is compulsory and free for children between 5 and 15 years of age. According to the administering Power, in 2006, there were six schools in operation in the Territory attended by a total of 580 pupils, and 88 full-time teachers (including one teacher abroad for additional training).

56. The introduction of British standardized tests in English and mathematics in the first and middle sections of school has shown that the majority of pupils score lower than their British counterparts. Results from the secondary-school examination for students 16 years of age and over show that these pupils are also seriously underachieving, with fewer than 12 per cent of them each year attaining the minimum five qualifying grades for the general certificate of secondary

[44] Information provided by the administering Power, March 2007.

[45] www.sthelenaonline.com, 16 January 2006.

[46] Derived from information transmitted to the Secretary-General on 12 January 2006 by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations and from published sources.

[47] *St. Helena Herald*, 7 October 2005.

[48] www.sainthelena.gov.sh.

[49] *St. Helena Herald*, 27 January 2006.

education or its equivalent, compared with 40 per cent in the United Kingdom. These problems have been attributed in part to the high level of staff turnover and staff members' lack of qualifications and experience.[50]

57. In November 2006, following a meeting of the Overseas Territories Consultative Council, the United Kingdom announced that, beginning in 2007, citizens from the overseas territories would benefit from the home student fee rate at English universities.[51]

D. Environment

58. St. Helena has an environmental conservation programme aimed at preserving endangered species and the diversity of habitats, which are an important part of the Territory's heritage and could potentially increase tourism. The World Conservation Union lists 40 per cent of St. Helena's plants as endangered, while other conservationists insist that the actual proportion is higher. In September 2001, the United Kingdom and its territories adopted a set of environment charters setting out for the first time the mutual responsibilities of both regarding the environment.

59. In December 2005, the United Kingdom engineering and environmental consulting company Faber Maunsell Ltd. conducted a preliminary study on the impact of the new airport on St. Helena's environment. Details of the initial report have not yet been made available. Faber Maunsell will continue its monitoring activities for the duration of airport-development works to mitigate any potentially negative environmental effects.

V. Dependencies of St. Helena

A. Ascension

1. General

60. Ascension was discovered by the Portuguese in 1501 and "found" again on Ascension Day in 1503 by Alphonse d'Albuquerque, who named the uninhabited island. Ascension covers an area of 90 square kilometres and is of volcanic origin. In 1815, when Napoleon was a prisoner on St. Helena, a small British naval garrison was stationed on Ascension. The island remained under Admiralty supervision until 1922, when it was made a dependency of St. Helena. From then until 1964, the island was managed by the Eastern Telegraph Company (renamed Cable and Wireless in 1934). In 1964, in view of the plans to establish British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Composite Signal Organization stations, an Administrator was appointed. During the Second World War, the United States Government built the Wideawake airstrip on the island. In 1957, a United States Air Force presence was re-established and the airstrip and ancillary facilities enlarged. It is now the south-east tracking station for the United States Air Force Eastern Test Proving Ground. In 1982, it became the intermediate stop for Royal Air Force flights to and from the Falkland Islands (Malvinas). In 2003, British and United States officials

[50] St. Helena Strategic Review 2000-2010, St. Helena Government, September 1999.

[51] www.fco.gov.uk, 23 November 2006 — Lord Triesman, Overseas Territories Minister, eighth meeting of the Overseas Territories Consultative Council, 21 and 22 November 2006.

signed the Wideawake Agreement, which opened up the airstrip to civilian charter traffic.

2. Constitutional and political status

61. No further developments in this area have been reported since the 2006 working paper (A/AC.109/2006/3).

3. Economic and social conditions

62. A joint meeting between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office/Ministry of Defence team and the Ascension Island Council was held in 2005. The meeting, which was chaired by Governor Michael Clancy, addressed the much-debated issue of right of abode and property ownership on Ascension.[52] The final decision on the issue was reached in January 2006, when the United Kingdom Government decided that the permanent right of abode and property ownership would not be granted. One of the main concerns for the United Kingdom Government was the tax liabilities that could fall on British taxpayers.[53]

B. Tristan da Cunha

1. General

63. The dependency of Tristan da Cunha[54] is composed of four islands: the main island, Tristan da Cunha; Gough; Inaccessible; and Nightingale. Tristan da Cunha, a round volcanic island with an area of 98 square kilometres, is the most remote inhabited island in the world. Its closest neighbours are St. Helena, 2,334 kilometres to the north, and Cape Town, South Africa, 2,778 kilometres to the east. Its population was evacuated to the United Kingdom when the volcano last erupted in 1961, but returned in 1963. The only settlement on the island is the capital, Edinburgh of the Seven Seas.

64. According to the Administrator, as at December 2004, the population consisted of 275 people divided into approximately 100 households. A team of South African meteorologists live on Gough. Inaccessible and Nightingale are uninhabited.

2. Constitutional and political status

65. Executive authority for Tristan da Cunha is exercised by the Governor of St. Helena. A resident Administrator is appointed by the Governor and is responsible to him. The Administrator is advised by an Island Council, led by the Chief Islander and comprising eight elected members (including at least one woman) and three appointed members. Elections are held every three years. All registered voters over 18 years of age are eligible to vote.

66. Tristan da Cunha has its own legislation, but St. Helena law applies to the extent that it is not inconsistent with local law, insofar as it is suitable for local circumstances and subject to such modifications as local circumstances make

[52] *St. Helena Herald*, 23 December 2005.
[53] Ibid., 27 January 2006.
[54] Derived from *Tristan da Cunha* (1988) by Brian Baldwin, Administrator of Tristan da Cunha.

necessary. There is one full-time police officer and three special constables. The Administrator is the Magistrate.

67. In October 2005, Tristan da Cunha participated in the Overseas Territories Consultative Council for the first time since the Council was created in 1999.

3. Economic and social conditions

68. No further developments in this area have been reported since the report on the issue contained in the 2003 and 2004 working papers (A/AC.109/2003/4 and A/AC.109/2004/9).

VI. Future status of the Territory

A. Position of the administering Power

69. In a statement made on 24 April 2006 while visiting the Turks and Caicos Islands, the Overseas Territories Minister, Lord Triesman, took stock of the relationship between the United Kingdom and the overseas territories seven years on from the 1999 White Paper entitled "Partnership for Progress and Prosperity: Britain and the Overseas Territories",[55] and reiterated the United Kingdom's approach as follows:

> "As the White Paper made clear, the United Kingdom will always be ready to help any territory become independent where this is an option, and if that is the clear and settled will of the people. The United Kingdom has no desire for any territory to remain British against its people's wishes. We have no continuing colonial objectives. However, if the people of a territory wish to retain the British link, then the United Kingdom will continue to honour its responsibilities for it. But I am, and I should be, answerable to the United Kingdom Parliament for the territories. As long as the United Kingdom retains those responsibilities, it needs to be in a position where it can discharge them properly. And that means that the United Kingdom needs to retain a sufficient level of powers to do this. In this process, the Governor, who also represents the territory to the United Kingdom Government, has a vital role. He or she must ensure, in partnership with the territory Government, that high standards are maintained in key areas such as the public service, the police, the judiciary, finance, aviation and maritime security — indeed, security generally — and human rights, in the interests of the peoples of the territory as a whole. In this context, it might be helpful if I set out the United Kingdom position on alternative forms of relationship, some of which I know have been discussed here in the Turks and Caicos Islands in recent weeks. United Nations General Assembly resolution 1541 set out some options for the relationship between administering Powers and Territories, including independence, integration and free association. The United Kingdom did not vote in favour of that resolution, and does not regard itself as bound by it. Integration would mean the Turks and Caicos Islands or any of the other territories becoming a full part of the

[55] White Paper presented to the House of Commons on 17 March 1999 by the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs; reproduced in A/AC.109/1999/1, annex.

United Kingdom, like the Isle of Wight. It would mean that the people of the territory would have to pay United Kingdom taxes. And United Kingdom policy would apply in areas that have traditionally been the responsibility of the territory Government — for example, education and health. I do not believe that this is an option that would find favour in the territories. Nor does it in the United Kingdom. The option of free association is also unacceptable. As defined by the United Nations, it would mean the territory drawing up its Constitution free from any outside involvement. The United Kingdom would retain all the responsibilities for the territory, but would not be able to ensure that it had the powers to enable it to fulfil these responsibilities. Ministers answerable to Government in Westminster cannot, and should not, put themselves in that position. So our aim is to work for a relationship with the territory Government which satisfies the needs of both sides."[56]

70. Moreover, in a statement made at the 5th meeting of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), held on 5 October 2006, during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, the representative of the United Kingdom said that the criteria used by the Committee of 24 in its deliberation on whether a Non-Self-Governing Territory should be "de-listed" were outdated and failed to take account of the way that the relationship between the United Kingdom and its overseas territories had been modernized, in a way that was acceptable to both parties (see A/C.4/61/SR.5).

B. Position of the Territory

71. As noted above (paras. 14 and 15), a consultative poll was held in St. Helena on the proposed constitutional changes that had been discussed for a number of years. Although the proposed constitutional changes did not receive sufficient support to be implemented, the territorial Government is considering its next step.

72. The Legislative Councillor of St. Helena, Eric George, participated in the Caribbean regional seminar organized by the Special Committee and held in Canouan, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, in May 2005. Mr. George asked that the Special Committee take up the following points of concern with the British Government:

- The required infrastructure to support the airport project should not be funded from St. Helena's annual aid programme. To expect this infrastructure to be funded from the island's already stretched financial provision would only accelerate the exodus of St. Helenians. If air access were to deliver sustainable economic development, it would be prudent to implement the long-awaited programme of refurbishment and updating of its present essential services.
- The policy of cost recovery as desired by the Department for International Development should be reviewed. In St. Helena's present circumstances, it is difficult to see how such cost recovery could be achieved, given the current demographic trends on the island.

[56] "A Successful Future" — Triesman Speech, Turks and Caicos Islands (24 April 2006), www.fco.gov.uk.

- The right to nationality, as set forth in article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, should be included in St. Helena's new constitution, and not a "St. Helenian status clause", as was being proposed.

VII. Consideration of the question by the United Nations

A. Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

73. The Special Committee considered the question of St. Helena at its 12th meeting on 16 June 2006 (see A/AC.109/2006/SR.12). The Chairman introduced draft resolution A/AC.109/2006/L.9, which was adopted without a vote (A/RES/61/128).

B. Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

74. At its 6th meeting, on 6 October 2006, the Fourth Committee had before it draft resolution VI, which welcomed the continuing constitutional review process on St. Helena and the decision to provide funding for the construction of an international airport. It also requested the administering Power to continue to support the efforts to address the high unemployment rate and the problem of limited transport and communications.

C. Action by the General Assembly

75. On 14 December 2006, the General Assembly adopted resolutions 61/128 A and B by 173 votes to none, with 4 abstentions. Section IX of resolution 61/128 B concerns St. Helena.